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Power struggle goes public

Ouster of staff attorneys sparks ire and raises questions about the accountability of the National Gay Rights Advocates and its leader, Jean O'Leary

By Jennie McKnight

LOS ANGELES — In the wake of several staff resignations and firings, a struggle over the direction, structure and personalities of the National Gay Rights Advocates (NGRA) organization has gone public in recent weeks. The staff changes, involving a majority of staff members in both the Los Angeles and San Francisco NGRA branches, have left the 11-year-old organization in upheaval just as it announced plans to expand.

In addition to raising questions about the future and direction of NGRA, the revelations have also posed ethical questions about criticism of organizations and in-

no longer do pro-bono legal work with NGRA because of the treatment Schatz and Goldstein received, and in a letter to NGRA Board Chair Richard White, the executive directors of four national and/or legal lesbian and gay organizations criticized the method and basis for the dismissals.

Kevin Cathcart of the New England-based Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), Thomas Stoddard and Paula Ettelbrick (legal director) of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Roberta Achtenberg of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Urvashi Vaid of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force told White that they thought Schatz and Goldstein had been denied "their due process rights" because the board had not allowed them to attend the meeting.

The letter said, "The basic unfairness of such a course of action runs contrary to the presumed goals of NGRA and to the principles for which we all stand in our daily advocacy against irrational employment decisions. None of us would tolerate such conduct in the non-gay world, and we certainly ought not to accept it within our own organizations."

Midge Costanza, a member of the NGRA board who was at the meeting where the decision to call for the lawyers' resignations was made, said she was proud of the board's decision and that she would do it again. She said the decision was not made "in ten minutes," but that instead it was the result of a process that has been underway "for a year." She said she was suspicious that "community leaders who have their own responsibilities and organizations to run suddenly feel moved to participate in the inner workings of NGRA."

Schatz told *GCN* that he, Goldstein and outgoing legal director Leonard Graff had "behaved in a constructive, professional manner with our primary concern always being the benefit of the lesbian and gay community." (*GCN* was not able to reach Goldstein for comment.)

Everyone who spoke with *GCN* for this story agreed that the exits of Schatz and Goldstein were the culmination of a bitter struggle that has unfolded at NGRA over the last year. What is disputed is the nature of the problem and the appropriate solution.

This conflict gradually became more public over the last several weeks, when reports of a long-standing power struggle began appearing in the press in the wake of the resignation of Graff, who resigned in September and will leave in December. Although Graff has publicly stated that his reasons for leaving NGRA are "personal," many observers have said a rift had developed between the legal staff, which

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NOVEMBER BOOK REVIEW

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Skinheads convicted in gay-bashing case

The victim of the attack and gay rights advocates urge passage of hate crimes legislation

By John Zeh

WASHINGTON — Two teen-age members of a "skinhead" gang were convicted November 17 of the violent attack against a gay man last year. A unanimous Superior Court jury found the defendants guilty of assault with intent to kill and armed robbery.

Mark Hyder, 18, and David McCall, 19, could receive a maximum term of life in prison when they are sentenced for last year's attack of a gay man, Rod Johnson. Hyder and McCall will be sentenced as adults January 5 by Judge Robert M. Scott.

A third gang member, Richard "Craig" Grimes, 18, who was accused by a government prosecutor of being the ringleader in at least one other attack the same weekend that Johnson was beaten up, failed to appear for the trial. He is sought as a fugitive in this case, and for an earlier conviction for violence.

"The courage that Rod has shown by confronting such a hateful group of young people in a courtroom brings all lesbians and gay men a step closer to justice," said Paula L. Ettelbrick, legal director of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.

In what is considered one of the worst incidents of anti-gay violence here, Johnson was approached last year by at least five young men armed with baseball bats. Friends of the attackers testified that they were looking to "bash some fags" for rent money. Johnson was left bleeding profusely with a lung collapse, and suffered fractures in his ribs, shoulder and finger.

Two months ago, Johnson and a consortium of gay, lesbian, and anti-violence groups, including Lambda, filed an unprecedented \$20 million civil suit, invoking the 100-year-old Ku Klux Klan Act (see *GCN*, Oct. 22). The legal action is believed to be the first civil suit against members of the skinhead movement, who have contributed greatly to a dramatic rise in anti-gay violence. The civil suit also marks the first

time a victim of anti-gay violence has sued members of an organized hate group for civil damages, according to Ettelbrick. And, lastly, the suit names three parents of two of the defendants, charging they knew about the skinheads' violent activities and "encouraged or failed to discourage" their children's association with the hate group.

Documenting hate crimes

Johnson said the decision reaffirmed his resolve to help pass legislation on the local and national levels that would require the documentation of hate-motivated violence.

At a timely benefit sponsored by the Lesbian and Gay Anti-violence Task Force the day after the decision was handed down, Johnson said he is afraid that many such "severe cases are never reported or detected as gay-related." Legislative mandates such as the ones now pending would help boost sensitivity by law-enforcement officials and encourage citizens to file charges, he said.

Johnson was referring to two legislative measures currently awaiting action. The Hate Crimes Statistics Act, which would require the acquisition and dissemination of data on "crimes that manifest prejudice" based on race, religion, sexuality or ethnicity, was passed overwhelmingly by the U.S. House of Representatives and has 54 sponsors in the Senate. A similar measure currently under consideration by the D.C. City Council, the Bias-Related Crime Act, would call for the collection and publication of data about bias-related crimes, enhanced penalties for attackers, and civil relief for victims.

Susan Myers, who works for the D.C. Rape Crisis Center and is a member of the Anti-violence Task Force, agreed with Johnson that passage of such legislation would help end "complacency" among gay men and lesbians about verbal harassment and other abuse. "Hate crimes in D.C. are

Continued on page 3



Jean O'Leary

dividuals both within and outside the gay and lesbian community. And the scandal has also raised issues about whether and how lesbian and gay organizations are accountable to the constituencies they represent and are supported by.

Lawyers canned

The most recent event in the NGRA controversy that has caused considerable gay and straight media attention and sparked protest both within and outside the organization was the decision by NGRA's board of directors Nov. 11 to request the resignations of the group's two staff attorneys, Cynthia Goldstein and Benjamin Schatz. The day after the Saturday board meeting, the attorneys were asked to resign immediately. By Monday, Nov. 13, the locks had been changed on the doors of the San Francisco office, and the attorneys' files had been moved and locked in another office.

The manner by which Schatz and Goldstein were ousted has provoked a response on both the local and national levels. A West Coast legal journal, *The Reporter* quoted two attorneys who said they would

NEWSNOTES

Quote of the week

"I feel like John Kennedy after the Bay of Pigs."

— John E. Frohnmayer, new chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, speaking at an awards dinner, as quoted in the New York Times. Frohnmayer has been under fire from the arts community since he bowed to pressure from pro-censorship right wingers by withdrawing a grant from an exhibit about AIDS.

On Nov. 8, wary of newly adopted federal legislation that prohibits the NEA from funding art that could be considered "obscene," Frohnmayer withdrew the endowment's sponsorship and a \$10,000 grant from an exhibit at the Artists Space gallery, "Witnesses: Against our Vanishing." After being sharply criticized by artists and the arts community, Frohnmayer reversed his decision Nov. 16 and restored the sponsorship and the grant to the exhibit.

Frohnmayer, however, did prohibit the use of NEA money for the show's catalogue. The catalogue, which has been central in the debate, includes criticisms of public figures such as U.S. Representative William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.) and Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who spearheaded the fight last summer for restrictive endowment funding legislation. The exhibit itself is about "survival" in the age of AIDS, and some of the works do in fact feature "images of homosexual acts."

Dyke diner vandalized

BERKELEY, Calif. — Just three nights after the Oct. 17 earthquake, a local lesbian dining spot was robbed and trashed for the second time in a month. Although they are shaken up, the owners of the Brick Hut, Joan Antonuccio, Sharon Davenport and Marie Della Camera, say they plan to remain open, according to the *San Francisco Bay Times*. The owners did say, however, that they may have to change the location of the restaurant because a rise in crime in the area has led to an increased sense of danger.

The Brick Hut moved to its current location in 1982. Davenport said that although there was a spate of smashed windows, verbal harassment and prank phone calls initially, the owners felt pretty accepted by the neighborhood after their first year there.

Other merchants and residents of the area have also been robbed recently. Many said they felt that the rise of crack and cocaine use in the area has contributed to an increase of violence over the past couple of years. The area is also economically depressed and there is a substantial unemployment rate.

The Brick Hut, which suffered an estimated \$5,000 worth of losses, has asked for support from the community. Davenport said that since it is a for-profit business, they have not asked for a lot of help, but she said that now "our backs are really to the wall." Although the owners expressed some disappointment about the probable location change, they said that it was most important that the Brick Hut remain open.

"I'd hate to see us go the way of A Woman's Place and so many other women's businesses that struggled and struggled and then went under," Antonuccio told the *Bay Times*. "I don't have any intention of doing that. We are planning to move forward and keep growing our business and getting stronger."

□ Kelly Gaines

Women twice as likely to continue sharing needles

SAN FRANCISCO — Over 40 percent of female IV drug users said they continue to share needles even after learning that the practice increases their risk for contracting HIV, according to a recent survey by the Santa Clara County drug abuse services bureau. (HIV is a virus thought by many to be a cause of AIDS.)

According to the *Bay Area Reporter*, 263 men and 126 women who were arrested in Santa Clara County between August and September of this year voluntarily agreed to interviews and urine tests. Results showed that 42 percent of the women interviewed said they continued to share needles after

receiving information about transmission, HIV and AIDS. In contrast, only 19 percent of the men said they continued to share needles.

Truday Kilian, who manages the county's criminal justice services, which prepared the survey, said the higher rate of needle sharing among women points to a need to examine the distribution of information and education.

"Perhaps those who are doing AIDS education in areas with severe IV-drug abuse rates need to look at the IV educational materials they're using to see if a different approach or more targeted approach to women who share needles is in order," she said. "Obviously, with twice as many women as men continuing to share needles, the message isn't having the effect it should."

□ Anthony Villalobos

Put a little bit of yourself into it

NEW YORK — An anti-censorship activist group calling itself "Art+" has been using a sticky mixture which includes cum from circle jerks to wheat-paste anti-Jesse Helms posters throughout New York City. Dennis Davidson, who jerked off for the effort, told Chicago's *Outlines* "We add our cum to wheat paste to signify our commitment — to give that little one percent of ourselves — and to symbolically give back to Jesse what he's trying to take from us — the freedom to express ourselves in the visual arts." The three-month-old organization, whose membership consists of 30 men, is now inviting women to "mix in their special juices."

□ Fredric Gorman

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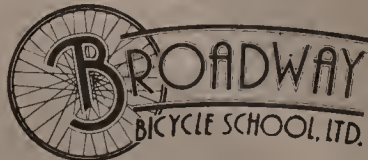
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NGRA

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was based in San Francisco, and Jean O'Leary, the group's executive director who operates the organization's headquarters out of Los Angeles.

O'Leary, widely described as a brilliant fundraiser and tough politico, is credited with bringing NGR from financial precariousness in its early years to its current position as one of the most successful fundraising machines in the lesbian and gay community. According to sources both inside and outside NGR, while O'Leary's fundraising skill was acknowledged, some questions were raised about the increasing emphasis that was placed on fundraising and other non-legal projects, and the lack of interest and expertise the executive director demonstrated in the organization's legal work. In addition, several people have publicly criticized her managerial style, some even raising ethical and legal criticisms of her work.

Bill Eisentraut, one of the NGR staff in Los Angeles who recently resigned his job as Director of Community Affairs, has probably been the most vocal and harsh critic of O'Leary since his departure. He called O'Leary "the Leona Helmsley of the gay rights movement," and said she was the source of the problems at NGR.

When asked whether any of the anger being directed at O'Leary could be motivated by sexism, since powerful and successful women are often targets of criticism, Eisentraut said "No, there is a difference between a powerful woman and an abusive tyrant."

Fred Ponder, a former NGR board member who had been with the organization for over 10 years when he resigned after the last board meeting (leaving before the vote to dismiss Schatz and Goldstein), has also been a vocal critic of O'Leary and the recent actions. He told *GCN* he thought the employees had been treated poorly and that there were no mechanisms for staff to effectively voice their grievances.

Cindy Bologna, former NGR Coordinator of Volunteers out of the San Francisco office, agreed that O'Leary's management style was a major problem at NGR, but she was critical of the way some of the criticisms of O'Leary have been aired. She said Eisentraut was "being vindictive.... We can say what needs to be said and keep our integrity," said Bologna. She added that while she was critical of some of the charges made about O'Leary in the press, she also "realized that whoever was doing it was really desperate."

Bologna, who resigned after Schatz and Goldstein were fired, said she became aware of conflicts within the organization soon after she arrived a year and a half ago. She said she tried to "stay out of the problems," but felt compelled to resign when she lost faith in the board of directors after their ousting of the staff attorneys. (In addition to voting to request the attorneys' resignations, the board also issued a unanimous vote of approval for O'Leary at the Nov. 11 meeting.) She said the problems were organization-wide, not just between O'Leary and the legal staff, and she described the workings of NGR as similar to a dysfunctional family. O'Leary declined to comment on the record about any issues involving NGR staff.

Bologna has not been the only person to express some criticism about the way the conflict has been aired in the press. Torie Osborn, executive director of the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Service Center, said she thinks the controversy at NGR has been a product of "oppression sickness," whereby members of the lesbian and gay community feel compelled to attack our own leaders. She said that while it is legitimate to raise questions about NGR's activities and direction, the criticism has instead focused on personal attacks against O'Leary.

Costanza agreed that the criticism of O'Leary has been inappropriate. She said the board had determined that Schatz and Goldstein were "the catalysts for all the other problems in that office," which was why they had to go. She said she thought the lawyers had "become obsessed" with getting rid of Jean O'Leary and that the ensuing public attention to the action has only been from "one point of view."

Costanza was also critical of those who have said the board of directors was hand-picked by O'Leary and is essentially a rubber stamp for her vision of NGR's direction. "I resent the implication that I'm some kind of puppet or some kind of clone. Any-



Ben Schatz

one who knows me or knows of my position knows that no one owns me," said Costanza.

Costanza acknowledged that O'Leary had played a large role in the current makeup of the board, but she said that was not a problem, and that Ponder and the rest of the board had no right to complain since they had approved the nominations.

Ponder conceded that he and other board members were responsible for the makeup of the board. He added that he and the board were "neglectful in letting [O'Leary] run the organization without much control from the board."

The future of NGR

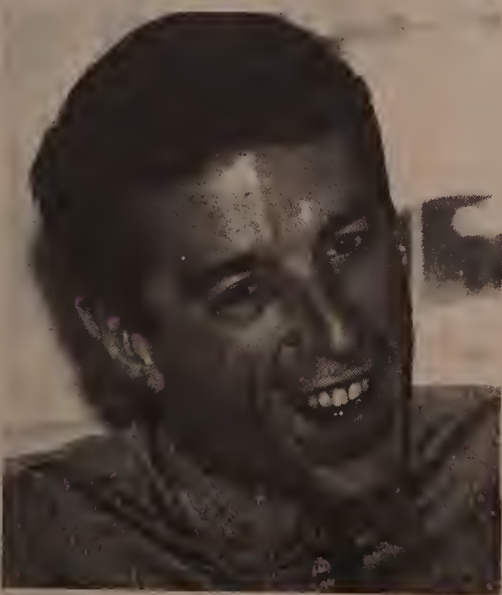
With the firings of the staff attorneys and Graff's imminent departure, many questions have been raised about the organization's ability to carry out its legal work. O'Leary told *GCN* that "nearly all" of NGR's pending cases were being handled by cooperating attorneys, and that searches were underway for replacements for the legal staff. She said she was confident that the jobs would soon be filled, and that she was excited about the plans to open a Washington, D.C.-based office — a decision which was also made at the Nov. 11 meeting.

But others are not so confident about the future of the organization. In addition to expressing concern about whether NGR's clients are being adequately served, many observers wonder how the organization is going to grow in the wake of the controversy. Ponder has said nothing short of the resignations of O'Leary's and several board members will restore credibility to NGR. Even Graff, who has not publicly criticized the organization, acknowledged that people will be "cautious about donating to NGR or being involved as volunteers," and that changing that will require "a lot of work and effort by the board."

□ filed from Boston

Skinheads

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Rod Johnson

definitely on the rise, and they are not reported adequately," she said.

Roger Doughty, president of the local Gay and Lesbian Activists Alliance, echoed both Johnson and Myers. "Horrible as it was," he said, "the attack on Rod is far from the only case of vicious hatred and violence against gay people for the simple reason that we exist."

"The skinheads aren't a bunch of foot-loose rebels without a cause," said Doughty. "Their hate violence can be stopped. Hate crimes must be prosecuted vigorously. Civil redress is another step. A third is passage of legislation." □

The Fund to Stop the Violence was established to defray the cost of Johnson's suit. Donations or inquiries may be sent to P.O. Box 66265, Washington, DC, 20035.

Repeal efforts underway

Opponents of the newly-signed Mass. gay rights bill are already pushing for a referendum

By Carrie Wofford

BOSTON — Even as lesbian and gay activists across the state are celebrating the signing of the gay and lesbian civil rights bill on Nov. 15, they are gearing up for a major battle against a statewide referendum. A mere 24 hours after Governor Michael Dukakis signed the bill into law, opponents had already begun gathering signatures asking for a repeal.

"They have filed their initial submission as of this morning," David Sullivan, general counsel to Secretary of State Michael J. Connolly, told *GCN* Nov. 16, the day after the signing. The movement to collect signatures to put a repeal question on the 1990 ballot is being spearheaded by former State Rep. Royall Switzler of Wellesley and the opposition leader in the Senate, Edward Kirby (R-Whitman).

"We protest against Chapter 516 of the Acts of 1989, 'An Act Making It Unlawful to Discriminate on the Basis of Sexual Orientation.' We request a referendum to repeal this law," states the submission by the opposition which accompanied their requisite 10 signatures.

Sullivan told *GCN* that the state constitution requires the signatures of 1 1/2 percent of the Massachusetts voters who voted in the last gubernatorial election — or 25,263 signatures — in order to put a question on the ballot.

The signatures must be turned in by Feb. 13, 1990 — 90 days after the governor signed the bill. Interestingly, the opposition has opted to go for a repeal, rather than ask that the law be suspended until the gubernatorial election in 1990. "They did not seek suspension of the law," said Sullivan. "They're only seeking repeal at the Nov. 6, 1990 state election, [which] reduces the number of signatures [needed] from 2 percent to 1 1/2 percent."

If the 25,263 signatures are collected, a question asking voters whether the law should stand or be repealed will appear on the ballot. A "yes" vote would mean that the law would stand, while a "no" would repeal the measure.

"It will be repealed if two things are true: if there are more 'no's than 'yes's, and if more than 30 percent of the voters voting in the election vote 'no' in this question," explained Sullivan. This second provision of the state constitution exists in case many voters choose not to answer the question at all. Even if a majority of the voters favor repealing the law, many abstentions or "a large number of blanks," as Sullivan put it, would allow lesbians and gay men to retain their civil rights protection.

Feb. 13 is also the official date the bill would go into effect and become law in

Massachusetts. However, Dukakis could exercise his prerogative of putting the law into effect earlier by implementing an emergency preamble. While some lobbyists and advocates for gay and lesbian rights advocate this tactic, others oppose it. As of press time, no decision has been made about the preamble.

"We are very committed to this bill. We will do anything we can to stop the repeal measure," Vivian Li, the governor's Advisor on Women's Issues and Constituent Services, told *GCN*. Li also said that Dukakis will consult with and listen to the lesbian and gay community about the necessity of an emergency preamble. "We've talked about it informally," she said. "There [seem to be] differences of opinion in the gay community, [and] we are definitely seeking their input."

Stressing that the governor's office considers this bill important, Li noted that the recent election resulted in repeals in several counties across the country. Voters in Athens, Ohio, and Concord, Calif. repealed municipal ordinances giving gay men and lesbians civil rights protection; and in San Francisco, lesbians and gay men lost the new domestic partners ordinance (see *GCN*, Nov. 12-18). "We have a very strong interest in seeing this bill implemented," she said.

Li said that the bill's amendments, which have angered some gay activists and been a point of contention among lobbyists for the bill, might actually work to the advantage of supporters. She said that conservative voters may be reassured by the amendments because they may address some of their main concerns. The amendments say that lesbians and gay men: are not "validated" by the state; do not have the right to marry or be foster parents; and are not protected from discrimination from religious groups. "It's not perfect," Li said of the bill, "but this is a good start. Hopefully, there'll be other legislation to take care of...[other] needs of people in the gay and lesbian community."

Just last week, the *Boston Globe* reported that a poll taken by KRC Communications Research of Cambridge indicated that "more than 70 percent of voters polled said they want to keep the new law while just 21 percent said they would vote to repeal it." However, Rich Braun of the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights, pointed to a difficult battle ahead. "The message [that will] go out is that a vote for the bill is a vote for gay sex behavior. We have repeatedly seen a 3:1 margin in favor of civil rights for gay [people], but a 2:1 margin against gay sexual behavior," said Braun, predicting that it will be a "close race" to convince the swing vote to opt for civil rights. □

Top cop responsible for riot resigns

A deputy chief of police avoids investigations of his involvement in violent attacks against AIDS protesters and labor organizer Dolores Huerta

By Michael C. Botkin

SAN FRANCISCO — Jack Jordan, deputy chief of police here and the older brother of the chief of the city's police department, has resigned in the face of an impending investigation of his involvement in the violent police sweep of Castro Street following an Oct. 6 demonstration by ACT UP/San Francisco. Jordan's timely resignation allows him to avoid answering charges that he obstructed an investigation into police violence against labor activist Dolores Huerta last year.

"I think he's decided to take the high road," said Jordan's brother, Chief Frank Jordan. "I feel this was a very difficult decision on his part." Chief Jordan refused to talk about the now-moot investigations of his brother's conduct. "He's retired now, let's leave it at that," he said.

Jack Jordan, who served on the police force for 29 years, will retain a \$65,000/a year pension.

ACT UP's Oct. 6 demonstration, protesting the lack of a federal response to AIDS, ended in violence and 50 arrests after several hours of police harassment (see *GCN*, Oct.

15). Activists called for a thorough investigation of the incident, and Mayor Art Agnos published a letter to the gay and lesbian community that promised to take strong action.

The San Francisco police have been heavily criticized recently for excessive use of force against protesters. Criticism was particularly strong after the brutal, televised beating of labor organizer Dolores Huerta who was participating in an anti-Bush demonstration here last year. Jack Jordan was implicated in a cover-up of the Huerta case, but Agnos backed down on demands for disciplinary action against Jack Jordan when his brother, Chief Jordan, threatened to resign.

Jordan's resignation has done little to satisfy a growing coalition of community and activist groups who are demanding an investigation of police practices. ACT UP is scheduled to meet with the city council about the incident and is encouraging victims of the Oct. 6 sweep to file charges against the police. □

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Gay rights victory in Mass.: Building momentum for the nation

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Passage of the Massachusetts lesbian and gay civil rights bill is perhaps the single greatest victory for the gay rights movement in 1989. Massachusetts joins Wisconsin, becoming the second state in the nation to pass comprehensive civil rights legislation for gays and lesbians. Key to success in Massachusetts was a ground swell of public support that convinced undecided legislators and overwhelmed opponents. The Massachusetts victory is emblematic of a nationwide movement that is building momentum to spark a chain of gay rights victories in coming years.

The March on Washington for Lesbian

and Gay Rights on October 11, 1987 marked a turning point in the nationwide gay rights movement. Never before had the gay community witnessed its own strength in such numbers. As a result, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators brought home with them a new sense of empowerment. The emerging strength of the gay and lesbian community is changing the face of our struggle for equal rights. This year's Massachusetts victory dramatically illustrates this change.

In Massachusetts prior to 1987, a quiet, insider lobbying strategy kept the gay rights bill alive, but failed to convince key legislators of its overwhelming public support. At the end of the 1987 legislative session, shortly after the March on Washington, the bill suffered its fifteenth consecutive defeat. That year, the bill had passed the House and won a majority in the Senate, but was killed in committee. This unjust defeat triggered a massive demonstration. Chants of more than 600 protesters rang throughout the State House, and 14 people were arrested when they chained themselves to seats inside the Senate Gallery.

The power unleashed by this demonstration transformed the public perception of the community as a political force and brought the voice of the lesbian and gay community at large to the State House. In the years following the 1987 demonstration, street activism, in the form of passionate rallies and angry protests, became a core part of the lobbying effort.

The high visibility tactics employed by organizations such as the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights brought the issue to the public eye. Extensive media campaigns drew front-page headlines and secured gay rights endorsements from public figures and the local media. The encouraging effect of this publicity drew new supporters out of the closet. Realizing the strength of our numbers, thousands of people took action at the grassroots level, contributing to letter-writing campaigns and constituent lobbying.

In 1989, the gay rights bill became an unstoppable people's initiative. A statewide poll showed 68 percent support for the bill among Massachusetts voters. Grassroots activists, building on groundwork already laid, garnered majority support in both houses and overwhelmed powerfully placed opponents. The visibility of a unified gay community made the difference.

Public support will also be vital to preserving the Massachusetts gay rights law. Gay rights opponents are currently trying to organize a last-ditch effort to place gay rights on a statewide referendum. If the opponents succeed, the pro-gay rights majority will be crucial to defeating the repeal initiative. Gay issues are not new to Massachusetts voters, most of whom have realized that basic civil rights protections for lesbians and gay men are long overdue.

The psychological and symbolic impact of passage of the bill in Massachusetts will strengthen the fight for gay rights in other areas of the country, helping those states that are at a crossroads in their own civil rights struggles. Connecticut, California, New York, Iowa, and other states where gay rights legislation has nearly succeeded in the past will look to the popular support in Massachusetts as a source of inspiration. As gay rights opponents in these states get wind of the public consensus, they will buckle under pressure. Moreover, the inevitable chain of victories promises to boost the national lesbian and gay civil rights bill, which seeks to amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include sexual orientation among protected categories.

The development of a national strategy and identity will move each state forward by quantum leaps rather than tiny steps. Our burgeoning national consciousness makes individual victories part of the nationwide gay rights movement. Sharing techniques and tactics from state to state will intensify our political power nationwide, as well as create a lasting unity among gay communities. And sharing the celebration of victories like the one in Massachusetts will heighten our sense of ourselves as a people with a shared history and a promising future.

David LaFontaine
Bradley Carlson
Andrew Held
Massachusetts Coalition for Lesbian
and Gay Civil Rights
Cambridge, Mass.

Gay Community News is produced by a collective dedicated to providing coverage of events and news in the interest of gay and lesbian liberation. The collective consists of a paid staff of ten, a general membership of volunteers, and a board of directors elected by the membership.

Opinions reflected in "editorials" represent the views of the paid staff collective. Signed letters and columns represent the views and opinions of the authors only. We encourage all readers to send us comments, criticism, and information, and to volunteer and become members.

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See the back page

for more info

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Betrayed by the bill

Dear GCN:

Gerry Studds, Oscar Wilde, Allen Ginsberg, A. Philip Randolph get no civil rights in Massachusetts. That’s because the new gay rights bill explicitly denies protection to anyone who has any attraction to persons under 18. That means no civil rights for two 15-year-old lesbian lovers, or a man in a perfectly legal gay relationship with a 17-year-old boy. This bill writes off gay youth, man/boy lovers, or any gay or lesbian person who fails to deny all erotic attraction for young people. It establishes — for the first time under Massachusetts law — that sexual orientation is legitimate grounds for discrimination in employment, housing and credit.

And that’s not all. One amendment safeguards Dukakis’s homophobic ban on lesbian and gay foster parents, and bears the clear implication that homosexuals are a threat to children.

What has been won in exchange? Virtually nothing of concrete value. This law leaves discrimination against gays and lesbians entirely legal in health care, education and foster care. In the coming years, this law will directly benefit a tiny handful of mostly white, middle class gays and lesbians — those who can afford to buy justice in America’s classist and racist legal marketplace.

Massachusetts gays and lesbians have fought for a civil rights bill for 17 years because of its potentially powerful symbolism, not its toothless protections. We have fought to affirm that sexual orientation does not diminish anyone’s claim to justice, not to divide our community into those who deserve rights and those who do not. We have fought to give gays and lesbians the self-confidence to come out, not to require many to deny part of their sexuality.

Instead of mobilizing the gay and lesbian community to fight the bigoted language in this bill, a small group of gay and lesbian “leaders” met secretly with state legislators last month and decided that the bill’s flaws were tolerable. They betrayed some of the most vulnerable constituencies of our community for a hollow legalistic victory. They did this even though many other offensive amendments were successfully struck down, even though some 70 percent of the state electorate supports gay rights, even though two massive demonstrations proved our community’s muscle.

This bill is an insult to gays and lesbians. Its ageism and homophobia set a dangerous precedent nationwide. Much more than our progress, this bill shows how far we have to go before we achieve real liberation. We must demand nothing less of those who speak in our name.

Bill Andriette
for the Boston Union of
Radical Gays and Lesbians
Boston, Mass.

Preying on the gay community

Dear GCN:

Not surprisingly, Mr. Riegle has attacked the letter-writer and not the letter itself (GCN, Oct. 29-Nov. 4). His focus on the personal is telling. No one should be made to feel ashamed for being a victim of a prisoner scam; unfortunately, that is what Mr. Riegle aims to do. For the record, I have never responded to a personal ad (although I might were I less afraid of being blackmailed), nor have I been the victim of a scam. I also agree with Mr. Adam Thorburn’s portrayal of the real forces behind prostitution. (Oct. 29-Nov. 4, 1989, p.5).

To respond to Mr. Riegle’s letter, first let me say that my letter was not intended for publication. It was a call to GCN to investigate a situation that I felt was important in light of GCN’s involvement with prisoners. The magnitude of the problem at Angola, the state penitentiary in Louisiana, alone is staggering: an estimated five million dollars extorted from unwary penpals, the involvement of the Dixie Mafia, the murder of a judge and his wife in Mississippi. And still the scam goes on.

If Mr. Riegle had read my letter carefully, he would have known that my concern lay not with true lesbians and gays in prison seeking penpals, but with straight con artists. If GCN were responsible to its readership, it would alert its readers to such scams. However, quite to the contrary, Mr. Riegle defends scams as being the fault of the victims themselves. Where have we heard this

Prudish and Victorian attitudes

By John S. Connolly III

Adam Thorburn’s Speaking Out letter on “The Atrocity of Prostitution” (Oct. 29-Nov.4) is a load of pseudo-feminist crap with which a number of card-carrying members of COYOTE (Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics), myself included, would take exception. I am a high-priced callboy in San Francisco and I do not consider myself degraded by either my profession or my clients. The fact that I am paid for sex in no way implies a power imbalance or that I am in some way oppressed. I live in a lovely home in a nice neighborhood, I’m clean and sober and quite happy with my life. I am well-educated and qualified to perform other kinds of work. The fact is that I prefer being a “rent boy.”

Adam’s letter is filled with a number of erroneous notions and outright lies that fly in the face of facts. Obviously he has not only never hired a prostitute (or been paid for sex), but hasn’t bothered to chat any of us up to get our own input. His statement that “white, heterosexual men are virtually nonexistent as prostitutes,” is laughable. Lots of straight dudes sell their cocks and asses to faggots and rent themselves out to women as well. (How do you define the word “gigolo” Mr. Thorburn?)

If you want to understand a phenomenon, the best way to do so is to experience it. In addition to performing sex services for cash, I have also patronized hustlers on oc-

casion myself. I consider these individuals my equals and not simply because I am a hustler myself. I usually do not have the time or the inclination to play out my sexual urges in bars or bathhouses, and an attractive young man on a street corner provides me with instant gratification of my desires (and usually they get a few of their sexual desires met, too).

Some of my clients are young and handsome and could easily get paid for sex themselves — others are older and less attractive or sometimes obese and would be hard-pressed in our looksist culture to find someone willing to show them a hot time for free. I recall Rosa Von Praunheim, in his film *It’s Not the Homosexual That’s Perverse...* making the statement: “Most fags are nothing but whores who don’t even get paid for it.” Aside from the derogatory connotation of “nothing but...,” his statement is largely true. And what, Mr. Thorburn, is your average Amerikan housewife but a provider of sexual services in exchange for economic support, i.e., a whore. In a very real sense, anyone who works for wages is prostituting themselves in some way.

There is honor and glory in the world’s oldest profession. The fact that we may be oppressed is more a result of attitudes like Mr. Thorburn’s than a result of “exploitation” by our customers. We had a similar op-ed piece in one of our gay rags out here

(*The Sentinel*) lamenting the monstrous fact of flagrant prostitution on Polk Street. The laughable hypocrisy of this was that in the same paper two pages of advertising are devoted to “masseurs” and “models and escorts” who themselves are selling sex.

The only “atrocity” about prostitution that is apparent to me are the prudish and Victorian attitudes about it fostered by wimps and wusses like Adam Thorburn who cloak their prejudices in the guise of new-age feminist jargon and who cluck and wag their fingers at Barney Frank for having the audacity to not only hire a prostitute but also to attempt to “rehabilitate” him! If I had a buck for every politician in this country who hired a hustler or a hooker, I’d never have to work again. And, if every prostitute in Amerika stopped plying their trade, the entire economy would collapse, husbands would beat their wives more than they already do, and sex crimes in general would increase. And, Mr. Thorburn, the next time you are thumbing your nose at a whore or his/her “john” think about the people that are thumbing their nose at you every time you have a cock in your mouth or a prick up your arse!

John S. Connolly III is a call boy and COYOTE member living in San Francisco.

Gay men debating S/M

By Jon Nalley

Billed as a panel discussion on *Experimental Media: Activism and Complacency*, this September 23 forum organized under the auspices of The New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival turned into a heated debate on the nature of the sexual expression and ethic among gay men — particularly on the meaning of S/M.

The controversy, described by a lesbian festival organizer as “amazing,” began when filmmaker Jack Waters, creator of *Die Valkyrie Die*, an opera film with pre-liberationist images and aesthetics, connected our community’s complacency to the legacy of the Reagan era and described this complacency as stemming from a desire to be part of the mainstream. Waters spoke of his own distaste for “banding with groups under banners” regarding gay liberation and asserted he say “gay politics and gay culture” as “just another aspect of the human experience.” He further stated he viewed such a tendency towards “normality” as “understandable considering our culture’s sado/masochistic base.”

Simplistically, Waters put forth that in this culture, “one is either the oppressor or the oppressed. Nothing in between is possible.” This, he felt, made possible the phenomenon of the complacent gay conservative Republicans — people who, “rather than struggle in the underclass...toward elimination of [repression],” prefer to identify with or belong to the dominant culture.” Such “complacency,” as he termed it, could only be eliminated by the “dissolution of the overly dominant preoccupation with S/M sensibility,” which in his view permeates the gay media. Waters asked that gay men examine the why’s of this “S/M fixated thought.”

Unbelievably, Water’s concern developed

over an agitprop poster done for ART+ (pronounced “art positive”) by New York artist Hunter Reynolds. Part of a political effort to organize artists against the Helms amendment on funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, the poster depicted a bound man representing a complacent arts community being fucked up the ass by Jesse Helms. The poster by ART+ — an affinity group within ACT UP/NY made up of cultural workers committed to fighting homophobia, misrepresentation of PWAs and censorship in the arts — led Waters to believe that gay men should examine the issues on the relationship between pleasure and pain in sexual expression. Throwing together not-necessarily-related constructs under a rubric of “complacency/masochism/passivism,” the filmmaker urged us to investigate the implications of S/M fantasy, and whether such expression is an aspect of our emulating the dominant culture.

Identifying myself as a member of the “leather-S/M” community, I challenged Waters’ assumptions. That he could bandy about such terms as Republican, passivity, S/M and complacency with total abandon, exhibited nothing short of appalling ignorance of what S/M is. Whether someone not in the S/M community — a maligned and misunderstood collection of several worlds within the gay male community — has any business pontificating on the meaning, practice and world view of S/M is another issue entirely.

Angry that a matter of personal choice should be debated in a community forum, I was unwillingly cast into a defensive mode, having to explain and defend that which should not have to be defended. How a venue at the cutting edge on issues of gay-atribe, defiantly challenging the homophobia

of the dominant culture long before “the Reagan Era,” could be defined along terms of complacency and passivity is difficult to ascertain. Evidently, Waters and others like him are so misinformed that they are unaware of the “pushy bottom” phenomenon, or that it is the bottom (or slave, if you will) who many times exerts the most power or manipulation in S/M relationships. So uncomfortable about breaking silence, I failed to mention the fact that many gay men into leather S/M are the most committed in our community toward fighting for our liberation, preserving a woman’s right to choose an abortion, and fighting U.S. imperialism.

Waters explained that he just wanted to know where the creation stopped and emulation began. Others spoke about the feminist ethic on the “political correctness” of certain acts of sex, who ultimately decides that political correctness, and implications of intercourse. In expressing questions on this taboo subject, those who spoke rejected the automatic tie-in of S/M with passivity and emulation of the dominant culture.

Importantly, they went on to discussing issues of choice, fantasy, desire and decision-making in the bedroom. Integral to this is *WHO DECIDES* the boundaries of pleasure and pain. As it related to discussion of the ART+ poster, discussion of whether “fucking” was positive, negative or both was discussed — some in the auditorium viewed it as always aggressive and violent, while others saw the meaning of the act as dependent on the individual context. The poster was defended by one person as the representation of political relationships, utilizing the S/M milieu as a description.

Jon Nalley is a New York writer who writes for OutWeek, The Guardian, and GCN.

Black History Month

Interested in contributing to next year's Black History Month supplement in GCN? Come to the first meeting of a planning committee on December 5, 6:30 p.m. at GCN's offices: 62 Berkeley St., Boston, MA. If you are unable to attend, but are interested in contributing an article to the supplement, contact Kelly or Chris 617-426-4469.

BOSTON BOYCOTTS GRAPES



We are proud to recognize the following individuals and groups who came out in support of the United Farm Workers grape boycott at the October 13 benefit *Allies for the 90s: United for Health*, which was a benefit for the Fenway Community Health Center and the United Farm Workers:

ACT-UP/Boston
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AFSCME Local 296
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Coalition for Black Lesbians and Gays
Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights
Coalition of Labor Union Women, Greater Boston Chapter
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Gay Community News
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Women's Mental Health Collective
Wood and Strings Music Center
Working Visions (Evie Frankl and Barbara Lipski)
Sarah Wunsch

* For identification purposes only

We hope that others will recognize the similarities between the lack of governmental and corporate response to the pesticide poisoning of farm workers and the lack of response to the spread of AIDS in our own community.

In unity, we must challenge these racist and homophobic affronts to our health and human rights.

Allies for the 90s: United for Health Steering Committee

Harneen Chernow
Carol Cosenza
Roberto de la Cruz
Greg Dorian

Jenifer Firestone
Steve Huber
Nancy Marks
Susan Moir

NOVEMBER

book supplement



Adrienne Rich

‘The only just power’

Walt Whitman’s contradictions and verse from Adrienne Rich: 1985-1988

Time’s Power: Poems 1985-1988

Adrienne Rich
W.W. Norton, New York, 1989
\$7.95 paper, \$15.95 cloth, 58pp.

Whitman the Political Poet

Betsy Erkkila
Oxford University Press, New York, 1989
\$29.95 cloth, 368pp.

Reviewed by Carrie Allison

Walt Whitman and Adrienne Rich are two poets who have courageously mapped the terrain of their times in poetry rooted in politics and sexuality. Betsy Erkkila’s *Whitman the Political Poet* uncovers the radical leanings of “the good gay poet” whose verses inscribe both his opposition and capitulation to the rising tide of market capitalism in the U.S. of the 19th century. And Adrienne Rich chronicles her own 20th century struggles with a searching look back at memory’s hold over the past as well as the future in *Time’s Power*.

“The widest orbit of beings becomes present in the heart’s inner space,” wrote Heidegger, and it is this inner space that Rich and Whitman explore in an effort to understand and challenge the wider space of the political landscape. Passionate believers in the links between the private and public

worlds of us all, both poets search their hearts with language, showing us oppression in the minute details of life.

Erkkila reveals this Whitman, writing his life as a microcosm of both the successes and failures of the “American democratic experiment.” Her Whitman is not the neurotic transcendentalist set forth by most scholars. Neither is he the relentlessly optimistic egotist who holds forth in numerous high school textbooks. She shows us as Whitman caught up in the political whirlwinds of secession, the Reconstruction Era, and industrialization — and a poet determined to speak to the needs of his country.

Born in 1819 when the Revolutionary War was a tangible memory and when the shape the country would take was still being hotly debated, Whitman was swept up by the rhetoric of radical democrats and freethinkers like Tom Paine, Frances Wright, and Constantin Volney. Along with a growing group of workers, he adopted the Jeffersonian ideal of inalienable rights as a hedge against the increasing powerlessness experienced by many in the midst of a burgeoning market capitalism.

In crystal-clear prose Erkkila points out the contradictions of Whitman’s vision. She describes his poetic outrage at the greed of the Gilded Age and the injustices perpetrated against Black people, women, and Native Americans in the name of progress. At the same time she confronts the fact that in his verse Whitman consistently lauds the policies of Manifest Destiny and worldwide trade that spread such injustices across the globe. She puts it best when she writes, “Although Whitman was cognizant of the ways that past literature participated in and justified the domination, power, and interest of an aristocratic class system, he never fully acknowledged the extent of his own ideological complicity as the celebrator of American democracy.”

An essential point to make, it seems to me, but unfortunately Erkkila never fully explores this issue, apparently unable to find much in Whitman’s past that can adequately explain such a contradiction — save to say that Whitman embodies the best and worst of the America in which he was rooted. This argument might be convincing if Erkkila’s work included the cultural details necessary to give us a sense of the times. Where else to look for an answer to this impasse in Whitman’s life and art than to delve into the intellectual currency of the times, bringing to bear the thoughts of Emerson, Fuller, Thoreau, and Melville?

Despite this lack of content, Erkkila’s analysis is impressively perceptive and her insights on some of Whitman’s best known poems are worth repeating, though much is lost in paraphrasing.

She notes, for example, a disturbing aspect of what is perhaps Whitman’s best known poem, his elegy on the death of Abraham Lincoln, “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.” She suggests that by mourning Lincoln and all the dead of the Civil War as meaningful sacrifices made in the progress toward a more perfect democracy, Whitman rationalizes the carnage of the War Between the States and turns away from the likely possibility that what was lost was lost for no justifiable

Continued on page 10

A gritty heroine in Glory Day

Not the New Zealand of fluffy sheep

Glory Days

Rosie Scott
Seal Press, Seattle, 1988
\$8.95 paper, 244pp.

Reviewed by Mara Math

The best yet from Seal’s International Crime Series, *Glory Days* takes place in a New Zealand you won’t find in the travel brochures. This is not the placid land boasting so many fluffy sheep per person, but the gritty and often dangerous underside of urban life in Auckland, New Zealand’s largest city. Author Rosie Scott offers strong, unsparing dialogue and excellent characterization in this highly original first novel, and draws connections as well between classism, racism, sexism and homophobia.

Part-time singer and full-time painter, Glory Day is the most refreshing and original heroine in ages, a big fat woman with tattoos, proud of her bulk and confident in her sexuality. She’s straight, but I guarantee you won’t mind. Glory is also a mother, and the depiction of her daughter may be the best fictional portrait extant of a developmentally disabled child: 11-year old Rina has a distinct personality not defined solely by her Down’s Syndrome.

Glory’s Auckland is populated by the genuine underclass, those on the fringes — two-bit criminals, drag queens, prostitutes, unknown bands, underemployed artists, biker gangs and druggies. The daughter of “a small-time crim” and an alcoholic, ex-wife to first a petty gangster and then a junkie, Glory knows where her strength as a painter comes from:

Even as a kid I knew instinctively that in all our squalor I’d found a bastard vigour in my life which would stand me in good stead.

I was a very fast learner. The few flavours hard-won from the ugly lives we led were mine forever, no one else could really taste them.... I wanted to keep my feet firmly placed in the mud and slime of it all.

Glory’s first solo exhibition will be a series about the “hard-earned knowledge” of the “brutal pleasures of violence,” the paintings focusing on the motives of the killer as



cover illustration: Clare Conrad

well as the pain of the victim, to “forever strip it [violence] of its false glamour.” As she prepares for the show, the violence she is painting seems to seep off the easel and into her life.

Literally overnight, Glory suddenly finds herself the object of a psychotic’s obsessive violence. In much the same way that she herself has often been casually dismissed by the world at large, Glory has — in this case, near-fatally — underestimated someone who wants her attention. Glory’s battle to unmask and stop her enemy is a harsh and sometimes eerie one, but that “bastard vigour” proves her saving grace.

A novel of exceptional energy and charge, *Glory Days* gets my highest recommendation. □

Mara Math is on her way to New Zealand as this issue goes to press.

Leather PWAs and CIA goons

A failed political thriller by the author of *Urban Aboriginals* and *The Oxygen Revolution*

Gentle Warriors

Geoff Mains
Knights Press, Stamford, Conn., 1989
\$9.50 paper, 298pp.

Reviewed by Wayne Curtis

Geoff Mains was many things during his short life — Ph.D., environmentalist, social commentator, AIDS activist, leatherman. He lived long enough to see *Gentle Warriors* into print, and only one day longer.

Gentle Warriors was his attempt to memorialize, even romanticize, the leather culture that existed in San Francisco during the ’70s. It also takes aim at political hypocrisy and wild-eyed religious fundamentalism. Finally, it articulates a nature-based mysticism that Mains offers as an answer to the many psychological challenges people face — especially people with AIDS.

The plot of *Gentle Warriors* is made up of a series of concurrent events, centering around a presidential visit to San Francisco, and is set in the relatively near future. A group of leathermen, all of whom are HIV-positive or have been diagnosed with AIDS

and most of whom are Vietnam vets, has decided to organize an assassination attempt. Instead of using bullets, however, they will use dart guns loaded with active HIV cultures. Convinced that AIDS is a product of the CIA, these men feel that the intelligence agency’s goons will release the “cure” rather than let the president die.

Sub-plots abound. The primary triggerman for the assassins is the lover of the openly gay candidate for San Francisco District Attorney. And an Ollie North-esque religious bigot, who happens to be the same sharpshooter’s brother-in-law, goes to the press just days before the presidential visit to San Francisco and announces that he worked on the project that introduced AIDS — “God’s ‘magic bullet’ ” — to the homosexual community. Predictably, this unleashes not only an Iran/Contra-like cover-up and scandal in Washington, but civil unrest, riots, and even talk of secession in San Francisco — making life difficult, in turn, for the would-be assassins and the completely-without-a-clue candidate for D.A.

Vital secondary characters include the

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Christopher Isherwood

Revealing Isherwood

Despite its maddening faults, Lehmann's memoir provides fascinating glimpses of the British writer

Christopher Isherwood: A Personal Memoir

John Lehmann
Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1989
\$9.95 paper, 150pp.

Reviewed by Maida Tilchen

In 1950, the then relatively unknown British expatriate Christopher Isherwood sent the following note to his friend and publisher John Lehmann, who was then editing a journal called *New Writing*:

Look here, if you'd like some stuff for [Issue] Number Two, I could send you some of my Berlin Diary.... But don't have it if you don't want. It is only mildly (heter) dirty and chiefly about my landlady, fellow-lodgers, pupils, etc.

From such humble beginnings sprang one of the classic literary works of this century, *The Berlin Stories*, more popularly known from its incarnation in the show and movie *Cabaret*. As this memoir recounts, it wasn't until the 1951 film version *I Am a Camera* that Isherwood saw the success of his work: in 1939, he wrote to Lehmann "*Goodbye to Berlin* [an earlier title] is now the most utter flop, final and irrevocable."

Christoper Isherwood first met Lehmann in 1932, not long after Lehmann had convinced his employers at Hogarth Press, Leonard and Virginia Woolf, to publish Isherwood's novel *The Memorial*. Although both Lehmann and Isherwood went on to other publishing houses, a lifelong friendship and correspondence began, and this volume offers excerpts from Lehmann's diary, and Lehmann's memories of interactions with Isherwood.

Included are Isherwood's gossipy glimpses of the literary and Hollywood royalty with whom he socialized: Aldous Huxley, Mick Jagger, Charles Laughton and Tennessee Williams, to name a few. Because Isherwood's exemplary talent was in making unforgettable literary characters out of quite common people, the big names dropped are not nearly as interesting to read about as the fates of the unknowns he immortalized. For example, Isherwood returned to Berlin in 1951, and Lehmann recounts "he described his visit to his old landlady, Fraulein Thureau, whose shrieks of excitement could be heard throughout the block when he rang at her door, and how they danced together in the street."

A great deal is presented here about Isherwood's close friendship with W.H. Auden, including a statement from Lehmann's 1971 diary about his surprise when Isherwood revealed that he and Auden had been lovers, intermittently, until 1939.

Isherwood's constant theme of his love affairs with various leggy, blond, working-class young men is more exhaustively covered in his autobiography *Christoper and His Kind*. Many of Isherwood's letters published here recount the frustrating succession of border-crossings he made in an attempt to keep his young German lover, Heinz, from being drafted into the Nazi army. Isherwood's devotion to Heinz' safety

undoubtedly took up much of his energy for several years, but on the other hand, it resulted in a course of events that makes such books as *The World in the Evening* and *Down There on a Visit* all the more interesting, with their accounts of Isherwood's experiences as a conscientious objector during World War II. Isherwood's justification for his pacifism — that he could not serve in an army fighting the army in which the man he loved was serving — is truly a testament to the radical implications of gay love, in this case particularly for men.

This memoir touches on many fascinating aspects of Isherwood's life, such as his years as a Hollywood screenwriter and his pursuit of the Vedanta religion and yoga. However, Lehmann's book includes little about Isherwood's sojourn among the Quaker war resisters, and only a few glimpses at one of my favorite Isherwood cronies: Denny Fouts, aka Paul, who was known as the "Best Kept Boy in the World," but who shared with Isherwood a foray into celibate yoga meditation.

Lehmann's book has some maddening faults, the worst being the lack of complete dates for letters, diary entries, and Lehmann's commentaries. Furthermore, the design of the book is such that sometimes it is difficult to determine whether entries are from Isherwood's letters or from Lehmann's journals — Isherwood's habit of writing about himself in the third person adding to the confusion. I wish this book had been gone over by a scholarly editor before release, for the informality with which information is presented limits its value as a research document.

The shortcomings of the book are quite balanced by 15 beautifully printed photographs of Isherwood and his kind, including one of John Lehmann's sister Rosamond, who wrote two lesbian novels. I recommend this book to those Isherwood fans who probably need no urging. To those who haven't read any Isherwood, find a copy of *Down There on a Visit* and enjoy a good sample of Isherwood's accounts of his lifetime of love, decadence, politics, and spirituality.

Just to add one other thought: Isherwood may seem like an author primarily of interest to gay men and Anglophiles, but I'm sure I'm not the only lesbian who is drawn to his stories. I can't help but wonder if the "homosexuality gene" has some attached chromosomes for interests such as movies, yoga, pacifism, writing. Christopher Isherwood was born almost a half century before me, into the British upper-class. But despite our very different circumstances of class and ethnicity, there is so much about his life's passions with which I identify. □

Maida Tilchen remembers the days when she didn't have to stay up all night trying to describe herself in one sentence for this space.

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Josephine Baker's Folies Bergere debut, 1926

Cleopatra of jazz

A dazzling new biography of Josephine Baker

Jazz Cleopatra: Josephine Baker in Her Time

Phyllis Rose

Doubleday, New York, 1989
\$22.50 cloth, 368pp.

Reviewed by Evelyn C. White

In thinking of noted black women who have categorically refused to have their lives stunted or circumscribed because of race, two names immediately come to mind: Zora Neale Hurston and Josephine Baker.

"I am not tragically colored," wrote sassy folklorist Hurston. "No, I do not weep at the world. I am too busy sharpening my oyster knife."

The same can be said for legendary entertainer Josephine Baker as she is portrayed in Phyllis Rose's glorious biography *Jazz Cleopatra*.

Rose traces Baker's life from her impoverished childhood in St. Louis to her Harlem nightclub performances, to the glitter of Paris, through Europe during the rise of Nazism and, finally, to her years as a civil-rights crusader and mother of 12 adopted children from around the world. Bursting with drama and detail, *Jazz Cleopatra* is a dazzling account of Baker's extraordinary life and the historical and cultural events that shaped her.

"Josephine Baker at first refused to dance bare-breasted in the Danse Sauvage, threatening to leave the show and go home," Rose writes. "Yet it is true that once she got used to the idea it took her a long time to put her clothes back on."

Baker began her climb to fame in the Revue Negre in Paris. She was among a group of black musicians, singers and dancers who sailed from New York in 1925 in hopes of capitalizing on France's infatuation with all "things African," Rose writes.

Agile, expressive and blessed with an exquisite body, Baker instantly became the troupe's star:

She epitomized ambiguity, new frontiers. She seemed something more fugitive and extravagant than a dancer — more like ectoplasm. She was a revelation of possibilities in human nature they [the French] hadn't suspected.

For the next half-century, "La Baker" used her beauty, charm and *joie de vivre* to completely enchant French society. While the initial response to her coffee-colored skin, bare breasts and banana skirts may have been tinged with racism, Rose asserts that Baker refused to become a racial caricature. Using her stardom as a springboard to speak out against prejudice and injustice, Baker quickly became a force to be reckoned with, clothed or naked.

"In September 1939, when France declared war on Germany in response to the invasion of Poland, Baker carried out her espionage duties while touring European dance halls — passing information written in invisible ink on her sheet music and pinning top secret notes to her underpants.

"Baker was an excellent cover. Everyone knew her. Everyone wanted to see her up close. She was like Poe's purloined letter, so

obvious as to be invisible."

Despite her triumphs, Baker's life was not without hardship. Rose painstakingly documents the careless spending that caused Baker to lose her majestic chalet, her failed marriages and her infamous feud with gossip columnist Walter Winchell.

The Winchell affair happened in 1951 during a celebrated Baker tour in New York City, Rose writes. After her performance, Baker and her entourage tried to dine at the Stork Club, but were apparently snubbed because of race. Baker felt that Winchell, who was holding court at the restaurant at the time of the incident, should have interceded on her behalf. Because he did not, Baker sent him an irate telegram accusing the influential columnist of turning a blind eye to Jim Crow practices.

"This powerful man was not used to people rebuking him, particularly not black people, whose gratitude was one of the pleasures of his life," Rose writes. The mudslinging went on for weeks between the two, with Winchell ultimately branding Baker a Communist and a "no-good ingrate," in one of his columns.

But through it all Baker held her head high, commanding the respect and admiration that would later make the road to success a bit easier for singer Nina Simone, dancer Lola Falana and other black female mavericks who thrive on the edge.

Sophia Loren, Mick Jagger and Princess Grace were among the celebrities in the Paris audience when Baker last performed in 1975 at age 69. A few days later she died in her sleep. Her nationally televised state funeral was unprecedented for an entertainer in France, Rose writes.

For those in search of heroines, *Jazz Cleopatra* is unparalleled. By charting the rise of a black girl from the slums of St. Louis to the height of French culture, Rose clearly proves that barriers can be broken. □

Evelyn C. White is a reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle.

Editor's Note: For a look at the evidence of Baker's sexual relationships with women, see "Harlem on Her Mind: Rediscovering the legendary Josephine Baker," by Michael Bronski, GCN, Feb. 28, 1988.

OOPS!

Due to a printer's error, Linda Haas was not credited for the photograph of the Reproductive Rights Teach-in at Brandeis in the Nov. 5 issue.

A photograph of AIDS activists storming the FDA, featured on the center page of the Nov. 17 holiday promotion, should have been credited to Marilyn Humphries.

Also, the cover and back page photos of hands grabbing GCN (the perfect holiday gift idea) in the holiday promotion and the Simon Nkoli photograph in the center should have been credited to Laura Wulf.

Last week's cover photo should have been credited to Cheryl A. Miller.

GCN regrets these errors.

Press Notes

There's still time to submit articles, essays, poems, notes, photos, drawings, etc. for *GCN's* special supplement on **Class Politics in Lesbian/Gay Communities**. The new deadline is **January 8, 1990**. We especially encourage submissions from writers who come from working class backgrounds and articles that look at the links between class and race — but all submissions are most welcome!!! Maximum suggested length: ten double-spaced pages. Please include SASE. For more information, call Stephanie Poggi at *GCN*, 617/426-4469.

BLK, a year-old publication for the Black gay and lesbian community, was called the "best new lesbian and gay periodical, period" by *L.A. Weekly*, in its annual survey of Southern California. According to *L.A. Weekly*, "The monthly magazine *BLK* has it all: features that thoroughly explore the convoluted politics and paradigm-hopping that make progressive lives so interesting, an unpredictable news survey with an especially sharp eye on same-sex love's status in popular culture; humor that might really make somebody laugh; and interviews with a range of provocative personalities, from lesbian poetic luminary Audre Lorde to AIDS activist Roger Pamplin...." *BLK* is available for \$18/year. Write Box 83912, Los Angeles, CA 90083-0912. Or call 213/410-0808. (And watch *GCN's* book review for an upcoming review of *BLK*.)

Submissions are requested for a forthcoming collection on the experience of **lesbian immigrants in the U.S.** Works especially encouraged from undocumented, ESL, older, disabled, and Third World lesbian immigrants, and lesbians in immigrant/citizen relationships. Anonymous contributions are okay; all submissions are confidential. Also looking for lesbian immigrants to complete survey. Deadline is March 31, 1990. Include SASE and send to The Project, c/o Lundy, 3 Madison St., Cambridge, MA 02138.

Prose, poetry, essays, art, cartoons, etc.

are requested for a **Women's Humor Anthology** to be published by Crossing Press. Previously published/simultaneous submissions okay. Payment. Deadline is April 1, 1990. Send to Rosalind Warren, P.O. Box 259, Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004.

The **Alice James Poetry Cooperative**, a writer's cooperative emphasizing publishing by women, will be accepting submissions from December 1-31, 1989. Writers must live in New England. Poets of color are strongly encouraged to submit manuscripts. Selected authors are required to join the poetry cooperative and see his or her book through production. For more information, call 617/354-1408, or write Alice James Books, 33 Richdale Ave., Cambridge, MA 02140.

Poets

Continued from page 7
reason.

Erkkila's sharp eye also catches the contradictory stance Whitman assumes in the *Calamus* poems where the 19th-century experiences of a white gay man are expressed. His "Proto-Leaf" poem typifies the whole section with its sometimes incongruous shifts between public and private experience, and she writes, "But despite his desire to come out poetically, to let flame the 'smouldering fires' of his homosexual feeling by writing the 'evangel-poem of comrades and of love,' the poem swings wildly between public exhortation — 'Take my leaves, America!' — and private address":

What do you seek, so pensive and silent?
What do you need, comrade?
Mon cher! do you think it is love?

It is finally impossible to tell whether Whitman wishes to withdraw to a private haven of homosexual love, or whether he intends to make a place for this love in the public world.

Erkkila's book, then, gives us a tantalizing, though not sufficient look at a Whitman who seems the living proof of Albert Camus's description of an artist as one "groping his way in the dark, just like the

Continued on page 11

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Poets

Continued from page 10

man in the street — incapable of separating himself from the world's misfortune and passionately longing for solitude and silence; dreaming of justice, yet being himself a source of injustice; dragged — even though he thinks he is driving it — behind a chariot that is bigger than he.”

But if this is an apt description of the artist Whitman was, it cannot describe the artist that Adrienne Rich is. Never able or willing to separate herself from the world's misfortune, Rich unflinchingly confronts injustice and her part in it. She writes with her heart dangerously exposed, and it is perhaps this moral honesty toward her own life that makes her poetry a mirror where we see ourselves and our world.

Time's Power is a book filled with poems of memory. Marilynne Robinson has written that “Memory is the sense of loss, and loss pulls us after it.” Without nostalgia or regret, Rich looks through the window of memory at those things now lost and those things that in time will be.

This book marks quite a change from her last book of poems, *Your Native Land, Your Life*. This time around Rich has turned out poetry immersed in sound and sight and reminiscent of earlier works like *A Wild Patience Has Taken Me This Far* and *The Dream of a Common Language*, whereas the terse poems of *Native* offered a far bleaker perspective for the senses and seemed more intent on communicating ideas than experiences.

There is truly a wealth of beautiful language in these poems as Rich returns to the more traditional techniques of her poetic youth with a far more practiced hand. Known for the sometimes harsh and unrhymic language that she began experimenting with in *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law* in an effort to free herself from the stifling influence of the male figureheads presiding over poetic style, Rich now seems fully at ease with her voice. She speaks with a rhythm all her own.

It is what has brought her to this voice at this time that Rich questions in poems like “The Desert As Garden of Paradise,” in which she explains

....This is why I ask you,

when the singing escapes the listener and
goes
from the throat to where the mountains
hang in chains
as if they never listened why the song

wants so much to go where no song has
ever gone.

Rich enters the California desert of her present and the Middle Eastern desert of her Jewish past, describing both as places of drought where life is “a steady bargain with the way things are.”

The poem is filled with startling images of life in the deserts of her imagination, where the things of nature survive in a concentrated waiting for the necessary rain, while human marauders move across the landscape, those who “into gardens of fig, palm, sugarcane / tried to will what cannot be will- ed / killed many in the trying.” Ultimately, she places her faith in the sacred quality of life that does not surrender, that “...tries itself / one more time,” as “You learn to live without prophets without legends / to live just where you are....”

In another long poem, “Harper's Ferry,” Rich plays with the inconclusive quality of recorded history, illuminated only by a litany of names and dates in which events must be peopled and colored by imagination and memory. “Where do I get this landscape?” she asks herself as she begins the story of an abused white girl fleeing her home in rural Virginia only to happen upon the farm used by the white abolitionist John Brown.

As Rich reconstructs the past, her poem gathers depth from the open-ended nature of the story she tells. She insists on the presence of loss, not only in narrated events — the girl and the escaped slaves running away, the foreshadowed loss of her life in the failed raid led by Brown and the later loss of life in the war — but also the loss of certainty, the failure of imagination to make up for memory. She refuses to impose what she does not know on the past, leaving us with many questions, wondering what else we have lost to history as she asks

would she fade into the woods
will she die in an *indefensible position*, a
miscarried raid
does she lose the family face at last
pressed into a gully above two rivers....

But “Living Memory” seems to me to be the cornerstone poem of the book. In it Rich

looks back on her own life. What she finds, once again, is a past not found in history books, “You whose stories these farms secrete, / You whose absence these fields publish,...” She reads the land for what it can tell her, wondering what death will be like when the once-living voice is silent and those who remain choose monuments in an effort to capture what once was.

It is the memory of the dead that gives Rich her power, the power of one who has witnessed change and been changed, too. She recalls seeing a photograph taken the year she was born of a road that she has seen again, many years later and recognized despite the changes wrought by time. She names this “time's power” in an affirmation of age and endurance, calling it “...the only just power,” a power she refuses to give away. □

Carrie Allison is a freelance writer living in the Boston area.

Warriors

Continued from page 7

assassin's nutty sister, the conservative Black candidate for D.A. who is being financed by the Klan, and the leatherman whose mystic bent allows him to socialize and sexualize in a leather bar that has, for those who remain in the terrestrial dimension, been closed for two years. (One of the bar patrons, in the middle of having his nipple lovingly mauled by the holy man, looks up at him and says, “You look a little like Jesus.”) Each of these people has a subplot to themselves, in what becomes an increasingly complex story line.

The many intricate and sometimes irrelevant tales that Mains tries to integrate into this work are only the most obvious reasons why *Gentle Warriors* simply doesn't work as a political thriller. First of all, by the time you're halfway through the book you're pretty sure how it will end, and you're hoping for a surprise twist that doesn't come.

A second problem with *Gentle Warriors* is that Mains' characters never come to life. Most are barely fleshed-out stereotypes. Surprisingly, this is just as true of the good guys as of the bad. The leathermen are uniformly hairy, burly bears, whose dispositions alternate from “teddy” to “grizzly.” Several of them, in various parts of the book, rhapsodize about the wonders of masculine man-to-man contact, and they all seem to reach the pinnacle of erotic experience only when elbow-deep in a buddy's butt. The bad guys are of two strains, both rabidly homophobic: either the unscrupulous and hypocritical — even dangerously schizophrenic — politician, or the blood-thirsty religious fundamentalist.

This unbending reliance on stereotypical behavior not only makes it difficult for a reader to take any of Mains' characters seriously, it makes the entire plot come off like a bad opera — overly dramatic and badly acted. Mains' prose can be lyric where he describes the beauty of the Pacific Northwest, but is generally too wooden to make his readers suspend their skepticism. And although this is one of Knights Press's “leatherlit” books, there is very little sex of any stripe to add any variety to an otherwise unengaging story (although the characters do talk a lot about the way sex used to be).

In its subject matter and approach, *Gentle Warriors* has much in common with two other failed political thrillers from recent years: Toby Johnson's *Plague* and Marty Rubin's *Boiled Frog Syndrome*. All of these books share a rather apocalyptic vision of the not-too-distant future, and rely on worst-case scenarios and wild-eyed stereotypes for dramatic tension. *Plague* and *Gentle Warriors* have a great amount in common: both are about government-sponsored causes of AIDS and a gay attempt to secure the release of the cure, both introduce mystic elements as essential parts of the plot, both rely to a great degree on stereotypes, and both have unsatisfactory endings.

What is most ironic about books like *Gentle Warriors* is that they take a rather simple and believable premise — that certain individuals in the government hate gay people so much that they will endanger the entire country to destroy us — and develop it in such a way as to make it *unbelievable*.

Real-life politics aside, there is simply no thrill in this type of thriller. And no matter how politically correct or laudible the message, a potboiler that doesn't even bubble just isn't a good book. □

Wayne Curtis is a freelance writer and graphic designer based in Boston. He edited Revelations: a Collection of Gay Male Coming Out Stories, Alyson, Boston, 1988.

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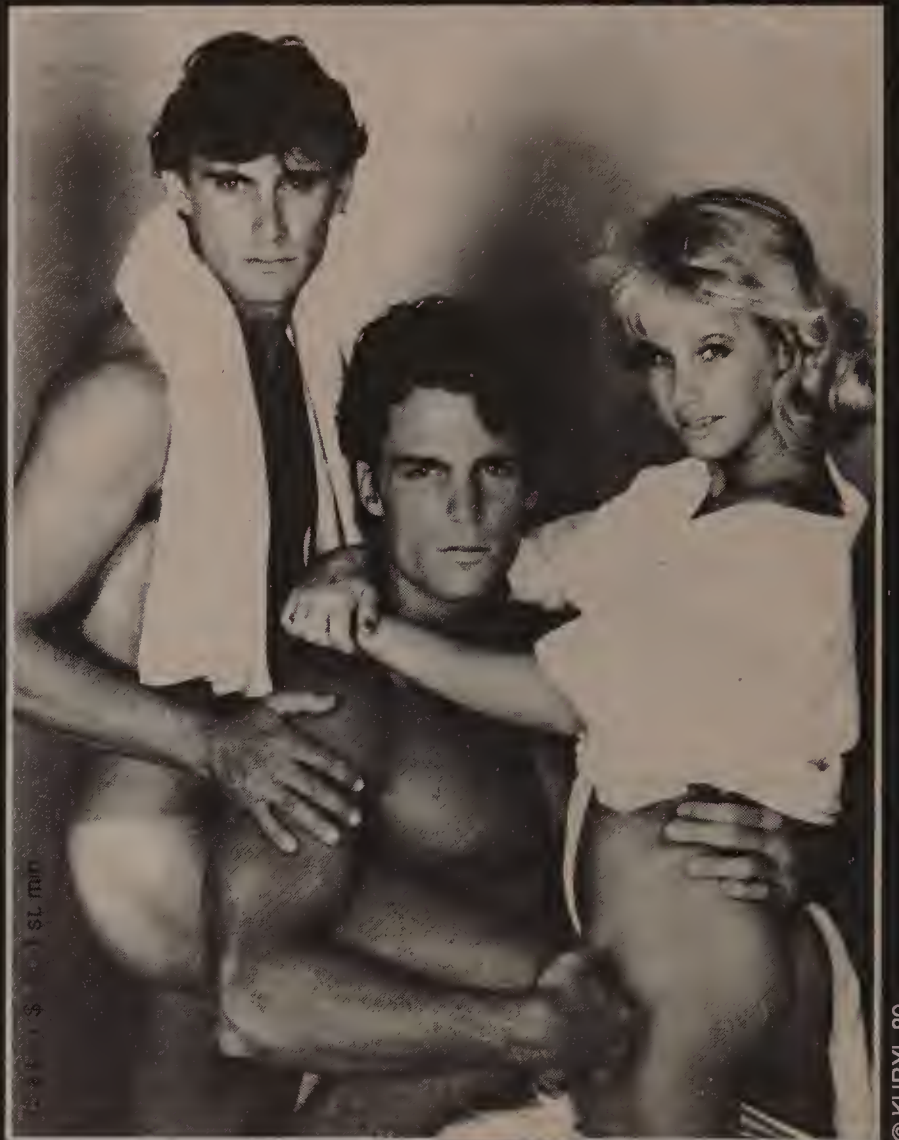
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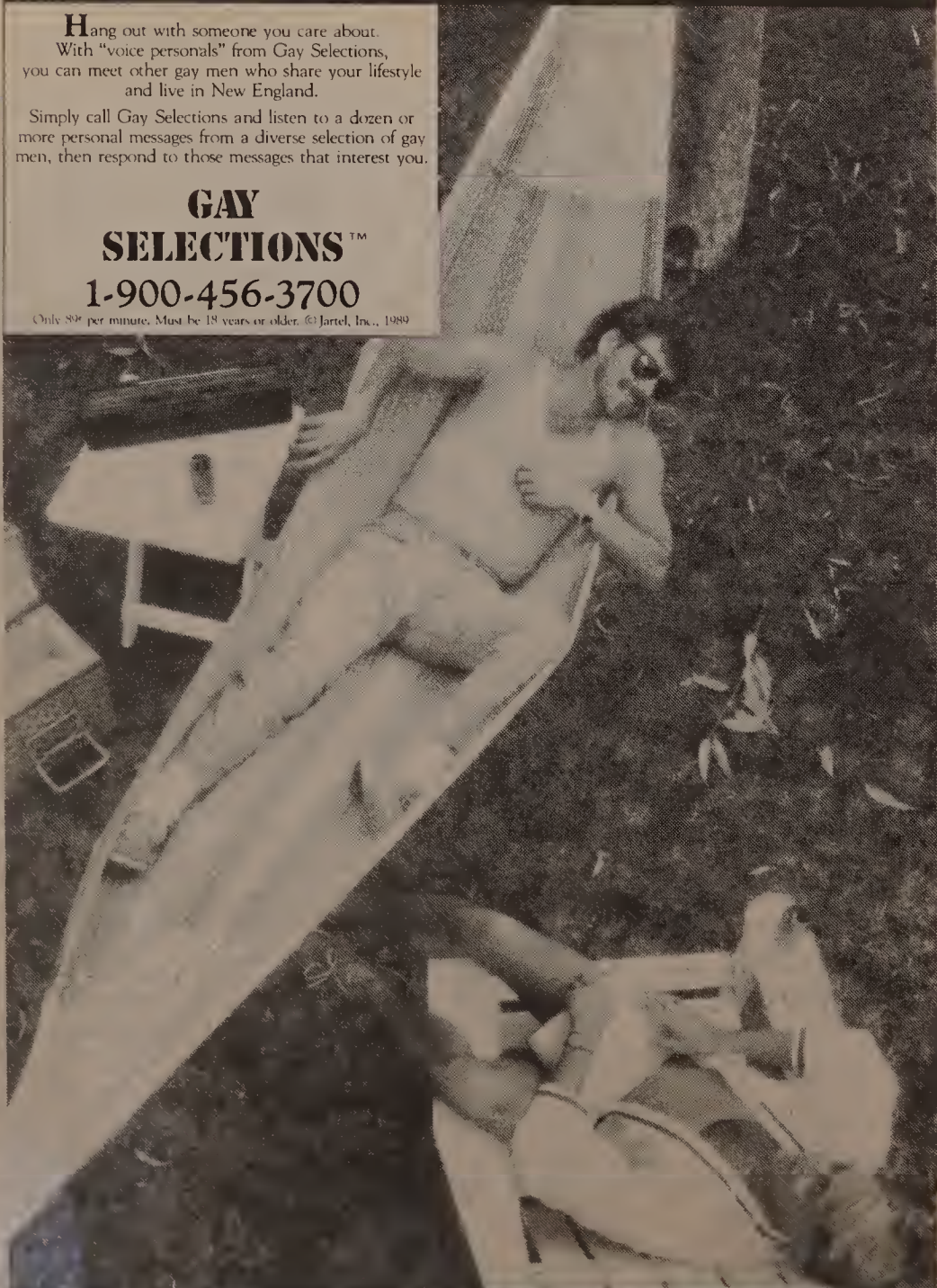
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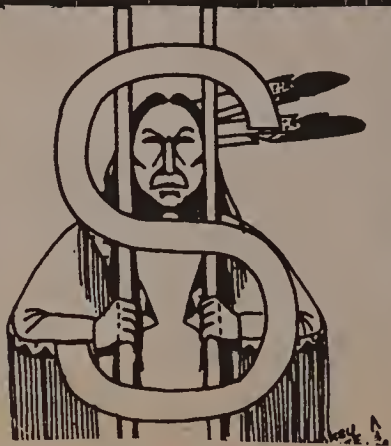
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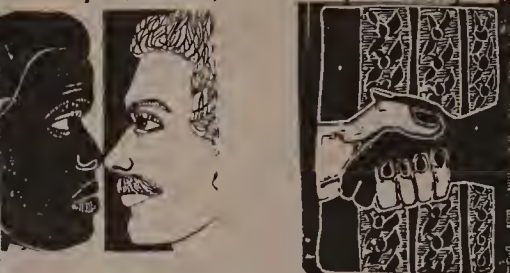
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Prisoners! Tell us a story!!

We are collecting short stories about prisoners who are trying to make something of themselves (inside or out). Something YOU think is good, not just what society says. Send us a couple pages. Handwritten is fine.

Help us put together something that makes prisoners proud enough to believe in themselves. Are you one, or do you know someone? Write Mike, GCN Prisoner Project, 62 Berkeley St, Boston, MA 02116. (THANKS!)



PRISONERS! Send us your ideas & stories about CLASS & RACE & being GAY! Do you think money (or not having money) affected your getting into prison? Being Black or Native American or Asian? Is there some racism among the prisoners? Among the gays? What's it like? Let's hear some stories about your experiences with being poor, or being involved with someone of another race, and being gay. Deadline is Dec. 10. Send a few pages of your ideas or a story. NOW! (Thanks)

We really enjoy getting the GCN here. It's very encouraging. I am a nurse's aid and enjoy basketball and weights in here, have a very dark tan for this time of the year, love to dance and dress out in Drag and also crossdress. I'm a very passive person if a person treats me right. I do not need no money, just some friendship. Please write. Joe JONES, B-062355 — 022, Box 699-W, Sneads FL 32460.

Speaking of "ripoffs"—
If all our brothers and sisters, both on the inside and outside, had more self-esteem for one another, there would be no so called 'scams', 'games' etc, etc. Anyone wishing to voice their opinion, feel free to write. I enclose a poem of mine for your next spread. Mark WHITE, 093651, 1150 SW Allapattah Rd, Indiantown FL 34956.

I am a 32 yr old gay man who has AIDS. I'm very lonely. I would like to correspond with others into reading, movies, art, camping and quiet times. Thank you. Michael COOK, C-77523, PO Box 500, CIM/East, Del Norte 400U, Chino CA 91708.

I am Black, 24, and I have been gay since I was 7 yrs old and my hobbies are cooking and love making. I have been on my own since I was 18 and I need a penpal. Your newspaper is very understanding. It makes me feel good to read about my people. Ernest CRAWLEY, D-1129 (4B3R-51), PO Box 3456, Corcoran CA 93212.

Bisexual, looking to write passionate, romantic young men. No money required. Ricky MOULDER, Unit 7 — 15371-077, Box 1000, Seagoville TX 75159.

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Greetings! I'm 23 and very lonely and would love to meet new and interesting people. I'm not looking for money, stamps or cards. Only a friend who could brighten my day. Thanks for reading this brief notation. Kathlena LEE, 151495, PO Box 8540 (Box 254), Pembroke Pines FL 33024.

I'm very interested in meeting a woman who's sincere and understanding and willing to try to form an affectionate friendship. I enjoy cooking, sewing, gardening, swimming and am now trying to learn racquetball. I'm more the home-body type, and like to receive attention. I do wish to correspond with somebody in the community. Deisy MORALES, W-26290, Room 216, Frontera CA 91720.



I am looking for someone who will write me and who likes to get kinky. I wear women's clothing and make-up and consider myself more female than male. I'm not into S&M, but I like strange sex. Please write. Michael Scott BROTZMAN, 151050, Box 7-3A-683, Moberly MO 65270.

Becoming male to female TS, a girl surrounded by pricks and thorns among the rose garden of my heart. Need fems to nurture a girl to rise into the budding splendors of roses within us. Love to write, to express feelings and share thoughts. All fems, prisoners too, are most welcome and needed. Danni MISKOWSKI, PO Box E-185660, Jackson MI 49204.

There's nothing like hearing from a gay sister/brother!
Young, black, fem gay male needs penpal to help pass this short time. I enjoy reading, acting, and music, anything from the B-52s to Labella. Will answer all and other prisoners (outside KY). Would like someone into leather. Elmer WILLIAMS, 94578, SMU-105, PO Box 479, Burgin KY 40310.

IN ISOLATION —
I need to hear a voice from a gay person out there to encourage me in my battle with this place, for which they are punishing me by putting me in an isolation cell. I have a right to my sexual preferences and will fight their injustice til I can't anymore. Please drop me a line to help with the loneliness. Robert JENKINS, 099006, Box 747 (V-3-S-8), Starke FL 32091.

Calling ANARCHO-GAYS!
Bisexual, 29, anarchist needs correspondence with anarcho-gays, or just anybody would do. Jeffe ROWE, 104385, Box 97, McAlester OK 74502.

In the little town that I come from they just don't understand being gay. In here either. It would mean a lot to me if some caring man that understands my feelings would be able to write me for being friends. I'm in good shape and have a few tattoos. Greg YOUNG, 89746, Box 1208, Eddyville KY 40328.

I am 29, with jet black hair and am gay, and proud of it. But I have no one to write to and would like to hear from some gay friends. Jerry COWAST, EF-171314, Box 8409, Columbus GA 31907



After spending 8 years in here, I need a friend to help me prepare for the shock of being back in the real world. I have no family who give a damn. I'd like to correspond with some gay brothers in the free world, I don't want any money, just a friend who I can express myself to. Here is a poem I wrote for my ex-lover: There was something unforgettable in the slender way you stood there, with hair of white-gold, and eyes of blue-fire, shining in the sun. John Brian BRITTO, C-34766, Box 2000, W-216, Vacaville CA 95696.

Bisexual, medium built. Hobbies are art, bowling, stamp and photo collecting, reading, music, SEX, movies plus much much more. Seeking someone open, caring, Black or other color is totally irrelevant. Caring is what counts. Alan HUSTED, 108721 (L-54), Box 699-W, Sneads FL 32460.

GM 49 seeking correspondence/friendship with GM, age unimportant. Michael DUERR, 78666-012 Mem., Box 34550, Memphis TN 38184.

GM seeking down to earth gay penpal. Douglas KOTT, 626126 (418), 1150 SW Allapattah Rd, Indiantown FL 34956.

Calendar



J.A. Rubino

December 2 Saturday □
Ronnie Gilbert performs in Paine Hall at Harvard University along with **Judy Small**. Shows at 5:30 and 9pm. \$15.50. Wheelchair accessible, sign language interpreted. Info: 661-1252.

Calendar listings must be received by the Monday before the week of the event. Photos encouraged. Please specify if event is/is not wheelchair accessible and/or sign language interpreted. Please use our format as a guide for listings and put each event on a separate sheet, if possible. Listings must be typed.

25 Saturday

Boston □ **The Way She Was**, Jim Bailey performs Barbara Streisand at Club Cabaret through 12/10. 209 Columbus Ave. Sat. 6pm and 8pm. Tues.-Sun. 8pm. \$21/\$18. 536-0972.

26 Sunday

Boston □ **Lesbian and Gay Neighbors of J.P.** meet for brunch at Doyle's Cafe. 11am. Mike O., 524-0557.

29 Wednesday

Boston □ **FCHC's Living Well Series**, Creating the Holidays You Want! with Rezakkah Norins. 332 Newbury Street. 6-7:30pm. Paul or Robb, 267-0900 to pre-register.

Somerville □ **"Lesbian Pulps and Fiction to 1975: A Slide Presentation"** by Maida Tilchen. Tufts Univ., Pearson 104. 8pm. Info: 381-3580.

30 Thursday

Boston □ **GCN Production Night**. All welcome. Proofreading starts at 5pm. Paste-up after 7pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info, GCN: 617/426-4469.

Boston □ **Stand Up! Against AIDS**, 18 of the country's funniest comedians in a benefit for the AIDS Action Committee. 8pm. Boston Symphony Hall. Info: 437-6200, ext. 347.

Boston □ **Female Artists Against AIDS**, an evening of dance, music, visual arts and educational presentations about women and AIDS. To benefit Fenway Community Health Center. At the Hub Club, 533 Washington Street. 9pm. \$15 donation.

Boston □ **The Group**, a social/discussion group meets to discuss "Safer Sex." At the Les/Gay Service Center, 338 Newbury Street. 8pm. 266-1129.

December 1 Friday

Boston □ **GCN Mailing**. Come help stuff the paper and meet new friends. 5-10pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN, 617/426-4469.

Boston □ **Gay Games** lesbian soccer team forming to go to Vancouver in Aug. 1990. 7-9pm. Kim, 395-5329 for information and location.

Brookline □ **Swingtime**, les/gay/bi Swing and Ballroom Dance. At Ballet, Inc., 185 Corey Road. 8:30pm-midnight. 8:30-9:15, lessons. \$4.

Brookline □ **Am Tikva**, monthly Shabbot Service at Workmen's Circle, 1762 Beacon Street. 8pm. 782-8894.

Cambridge □ **Robin Field** with Rena Wade at Modern Times Cafe, 134 Hampshire Street. 9pm-11pm. \$3.

Cambridge □ **The MIT Museum** will be exhibiting sections of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt and the photographs of Nicholas Nixon in honor of World AIDS Day. 265 Mass. Ave. Through 12/29. 253-4444.

Boston □ **Lesbian Lawyers** and Legal Workers meet. New members welcome. 7pm. Carol, 483-3685 for more info.

2 Saturday

Boston □ **Lesbian School Teachers/Administrators** holiday potluck. 7pm. 323-1536 for info and directions.

New York City □ **The Flirtations** with special guest, Michael Callen. At Symphony Space, 2537 Broadway at 95th Street. 8pm. \$15. 212/864-5400.

Cambridge □ **Ronnie Gilbert** and **Judy Small** perform in Paine Hall, Harvard Univ. Shows at 5:30 and 9pm. \$15.50. Wheelchair accessible, sign-language interpreted. Info: 661-1252.

3 Sunday

Boston □ **AIDS Action Committee's 7th annual Christmas Auction** and Bazaar at the Opera House, 539 Washington Street. Silent Auction and Bazaar at 4pm, Oral Auction at 7pm. 266-6909.

Dorchester □ **Dorchester GALA's** 3rd Annual Auction at the First Parish Church on Meetinghouse Hill. 7pm. 825-3737.

Somerville □ **Gays and Lesbians of Somerville and Surroundings** holds monthly potluck and social. 71 Union Square. 6pm. Lisa, 628-2532 or Mike, 628-2643.

Boston □ **The Second Annual Yuletide Stride Road Race** to benefit people with AIDS. Starts at the Boston Common. 12noon. \$10 donation. For application call 282-0013 or 232-7929.

Watertown □ **Gays and Lesbians of Watertown and Surroundings**. Anniversary Holiday Potluck Brunch. 11:30am-3pm. Becky, 395-4664 or Lloyd, 924-6113.

4 Monday

Boston □ **FCHC's Living Well Series**, Understanding HIV's legal and insurance issues with Denise McWilliams of GLAD and Robert Greenwald of AAC. 338 Newbury Street. 6-8pm. Paul or Robb at 266-0900 to preregister.

5 Tuesday

Boston □ **Gay Fathers of Greater Boston** meet to discuss "Dealing with the Holidays." At the Lindemann Center, 25 Staniford Street, 2nd floor. 8-10pm. 742-7897.

6 Wednesday

Boston □ **FCHC's Living Well Series**, Creating the Holidays You Want! with Rezakkah Norins. 332 Newbury Street. 6-7:30pm. Paul or Robb, 267-0900 to preregister.

7 Thursday

Boston □ **GCN Production Night**. All welcome. Proofreading starts at 5pm. Paste-up after 7pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info, GCN: 617/426-4469.

Boston □ **The Group**, a social/discussion group, meets at the Lesbian and Gay Service Center. 338 Newbury Street. 8pm. 266-1129.

Cambridge □ **Women's Community Cancer Project**. Feminists meet to discuss strategies for political action on cancer issues and to develop support and services for women who have cancer. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant Street. 7-9pm.

8 Friday

Boston □ **GCN Mailing**. Come help stuff the paper and meet new friends. 5-10pm. 62 Berkeley St., near Arlington and Back Bay T-stops. Info: GCN, 617/426-4469.

Dorchester □ **Multicultural Concert** featuring Flor de Cana, Volo Volo and Right Time to benefit the Bowdoin Street Health Center. Strand Theatre, 543 Columbia Road. 8pm. \$15. 825-9800.

9 Saturday

Dorchester □ **Sweet Honey in the Rock**, the internationally-acclaimed five-woman a capella gospel group, performing at the Strand Theatre, 543 Columbia Road. 8pm. \$18/\$15. 282-8000.

Cambridge □ **Saphire-Uppity Women Blues** perform at Indigo, 823 Main Street. 8pm. \$8.50.

Weekly events

Saturday

Boston □ **The Boston Area Rape Crisis Center** new training session for hotline. 617/492-RAPE.

Boston □ **Gay Boston**, with Jim Voltz. Boston Neighborhood Network, channels A3 and A8. 7:30-8pm.

Boston □ **Body Electric**: healing with group sensual massage for gay and bisexual men. 551 Tremont. 7:30pm. \$12. 522-9164.

Sunday

Boston □ **Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth** (BAGLY). Open to youth age 22 and under. 35 Bowdoin St. 2-5pm. 354-6658.

Boston □ **Metro Healing healing group** for everyone. Metropolitan Health Club aerobics room, 209 Columbus Ave. 7:30-9:30pm. 426-9205.

Boston □ **The Gay Dating Show**, WUNR 1600 AM. 10:30pm-2:30am. Lesbians and Gay Men.

Boston □ **ALATEEN Group** open to lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, 22 and under. 338 Newbury Street, Rm. 202k. 6pm-7:30pm. Dave, 629-2518 or Frank, 666-8912.

Monday

Cambridge □ **Healing Circle** group healing. 5 Upland Rd. 7:30-9:30pm. \$5 suggested. 864-1989.

Cambridge □ **Lesbian Rap**. 11/27 Night on the Town, 12/4 Erotic Writing. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8-10pm. Free. 354-8807 (TTY/voice).

Boston □ **Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights** holds bi-weekly planning meeting. Les/Gay Service Center, 338 Newbury Street. 7pm. 776-6956.

Tuesday

Boston □ **Gay Fathers of Greater Boston** meet 1st and 3rd Tues. of the month. Lindemann Ctr., 2nd fl. 8-10pm. 742-7897.

Boston □ **Gay and Lesbian Support Group for Adult Children of Alcoholics**. Faulkner Hospital. 8:30-10pm. Intake interview required. 522-5800 x1908.

Boston □ **Lesblan and Gay Concert and Marching Band**. No audition necessary. YWCA, 120 Clarendon St. 7:15pm. Joe 625-3304, Zoe 396-2989.

Providence, RI □ **ACT UP/Rhode Island** open meetings. Rocket, 73 Richmond St. 7pm. 273-7228.

Boston □ **ACT UP/Boston** meets to confront the AIDS crisis. Gay and Lesbian Service Center, 338 Newbury Street, Rm. 203. 7pm. 49-ACT UP.

Cambridge □ **Bisexual Women's Rap**. 11/28 The Holiday Seasons, 12/5 Questioning conventional sexuality. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7:30-10pm. 354-8807.

Cambridge □ **30-plus Lesbian Rap** 7-8:30pm. 11/28 Videotapes will be shown, 12/5 Lesbians and laughter. The Women's Center (see above).

Cambridge □ **Women For Sobriety**, a self help group for women recovering from addictions. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 8-9:30pm. 354-8807

Arlington □ **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays** meets on the second Tuesday of every month at First Parish Unitarian Church, 630 Mass. Ave. 7:15pm. Info: 547-2440 or 508/562-5807.

Wednesday

Boston □ **Boston Alliance of Gay and Lesbian Youth**. Open to youth age 22 and under. 35 Bowdoin St. New persons' meeting 6pm; women and men meet separately 6:45-7:30; general meeting at 7:30pm. 354-6658.

Boston □ **Bisexual Children of Alcoholics**. Mass. General Hosp., lower amphitheater 7:30pm. 259-1559.

Cambridge □ **Say it, Sister!** WMBR, 88.1 FM. 7-8pm.

Boston □ **Women's Self-Defense Classes** sponsored by Women's Self Defense Collective. Studio 3, 731 Harrison Ave., 2nd floor. 6-8pm. \$10-\$35 sliding scale per mo. 625-1115.

Cambridge □ **Lesbian Al-Anon** with childcare. Women's Center (see above). 6:30-8pm.

Thursday

Northampton □ **Valley Gay Alliance** meets 1st, 3rd Th. every month, basement of the Unitarian Church, 22 Main St. 7:30pm. 413/527-5310.

Stoneham □ **Incest Survivors Group** for women. New England Memorial Hospital, 5 Woodland Rd. 5-6:30pm. Sara Epstein, 979-7025.

Cambridge □ **Wise Woman Tradition Herbal Medicine and Women's Wisdom Classes**. Sliding scale. Whitewolf, 277-8232.

Boston □ **Boston Area Rape Crisis Center** drop-in group for women who have been raped. 492-RAPE.

Cambridge □ **Incest Survivors Group**. Women's Center (see above). 7:30-9:30pm.

Cambridge □ **Non-offending male sexual abuse survivors** group meets first Thursday of every month. Cambridge Ctr. of Commerce conference room, 859 Mass. Ave. 8:30-10pm. \$5 donation. 498-9881.

Friday

Worcester □ **AIDS Project-Worcester support group** for HIV positive, PWAs, PWARCs, supporters. Open to all lesbians, gay men. 51 Jackson St. 7-9pm. Dana 508/755-3773.

Boston □ **Healing group** for everyone. Santa Fe Hair Salon, 528 Tremont St. 7:30-9:30pm. 426-9205.

An aria of women and AIDS

Experimental opera in Boston

Territories. Composed and directed by Roland Tec. Musical direction by Margaret Ulmer. Performed by the New Opera Theatre Ensemble. With Cherie Magnello, Karin Fogelsong, and Victoria Pittman. At the Arlington Street Church (not wheelchair accessible), through December 2.

By Marea Murray

An all-woman cast premieres in a new opera (yes, opera) about the relationship between a nurse and a hospitalized woman with AIDS. Directed by Roland Tec, “Territories” is the first production of the South End-based New Opera Theatre Ensemble (NOTE), a company committed to dealing with social issues. After months of research and improvisational work, Karin Foglesong, Cherie Magnello and Victoria Pittman sing and act out a variety of roles in an original work that is challenging, but ultimately too ambitious in its present form.

The three ensemble members play two or three roles each. While this underscores the many ways women are involved in AIDS work, the purported focus on Louise (the nurse) and Alex Caras (the woman living with AIDS) is somewhat diffused. In the end the audience is left with plenty of provocative material and no closure — a situation not unlike the AIDS pandemic itself.

“Territories” is unique in its exploration of AIDS from female perspectives and I was cheered by the subtle references to sexism — for example, when Alex’s sister refuses to take Louise’s word that all is being done for her and insists on speaking to the doctor (who she presumes is male). There’s even a lesbian subplot — somewhat contrived and schmaltzy, but a very welcome inclusion.

Alex is also a woman without children — an implicit challenge to the assumption that all women with AIDS are mothers. In addition, as a health care worker myself, I was gratified that the stress caregivers experience was acknowledged. For all of these reasons, “Territories” is a “must see.”

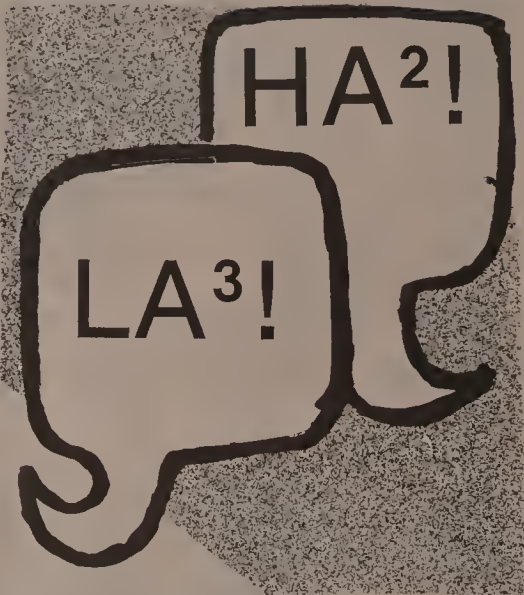
Issues of racism are not addressed, however, which may be due in part to the fact that the cast is entirely white. Another problem is that we don’t get much of a sense of how Alex became who she is. All we know is that she’s a painter with no one in her life but a co-dependent sister and a long distance artistic friend, Sam. There’s one brief scene where the chorus sings of dual addiction (cocaine and alcohol), but related themes go unexplored. The final scene, while searing, is a bit of surprise. I’m not sure we would have known the opera was over, but for a fast cue to applaud from the back of the hall.

In general, the piece drags a bit and there are some unfortunate licenses taken. I was particularly annoyed that the social work character is stereotypically cast and an awkward comic foil. Frankly, the presentation demeans the roles (we) social workers are playing in coping with AIDS.

Nonetheless, the acting is cohesive, with Pittman’s performance as Alex especially moving and believable. Soprano Karin Foglesong’s voice is particularly soaring and strong, and the dialogue is understandable (a relief for those of us who aren’t opera aficionados).

Admittedly experimental, the company deserves much praise for even addressing the issues of women and AIDS. Much of the material developed over the months of rehearsals was left out and perhaps more condensation and evolution will improve what is already a very good effort. □

Marea Murray is a social worker who has been doing AIDS work since 1984.



Punchline whiplash

Famous funny folks will score big yuks to raise big bucks in an upcoming Beantown bennie

By Christopher Wittke

When Boston’s AIDS Action Committee hosts its “Stand Up! Against AIDS” benefit next week, 18 stand-up comics at various stages of national fame will deliver 4-7 minute-long monologues in a performance lasting about two and a half hours. By the end of this mini-marathon, you will either believe that laughter really is the best medicine or be suffering from punchline whiplash. If all goes well, you’ll feel a little bit of both.

The range of talent for “Stand Up! Against AIDS” runs a surprisingly diverse gamut, especially when compared to the typical roster offered by such TV fare as “Comic Strip Live,” which is almost uniformly white, male and sexist.

Barry Crimmins is remarkably leftist (he has taken his brand of comedy on tour to

Central America) and his deft skewerings of the Iran-Contra scandal kept Boston audiences in stitches throughout the North hearings. Denis Leary is one of those yelpers — sort of like Bobcat Goldthwaite only less political. His recent appearances on the “MTV Half Hour Comedy Hour” with host Mario Joyner (another “Stand Up!” participant) and an award for Best Boston Comedian at a Laugh-Off last year indicate that this guy’s bizarre star is on the rise.

And of course, the women comics scheduled to perform are among the best, too. As a die-hard woman comic fanatic I can personally vouch for the guaranteed-to-make-your-eyes-water Rosie O’Donnell (who hypothesizes that dentists get their mirrors from the side of Barbie’s Dream Camper). Her riffs on family life — occasionally *vis a vis* the *Brady Bunch* — are positively sidesplitting. Lesbian comic Kate Clinton, a community staple for years, will get the chance to show her more mainstream (and presumably hetero) co-stars the lesbian way to do things. Other comics of note, among them Lizz Winstead, Tony V., Chris Rock and occasional *Letterman* guest Jonathan Katz will also get their moments in the spotlight.

Of course, even those only vaguely familiar with the stand-up comedy arena have to wonder if there is any chance one of the comics will deliver a Big Ed-like monologue that offends or attacks the audience? Not if AIDS Action Committee’s special events manager Al Wynder has anything to say about it, and he does. “Each performer has been told there is to be no group of people abused,” says Wynder, “They knew that in advance when they came on board for this benefit.”

Now that we can all heave a sigh of relief (and/or keep our fingers crossed) we can just sit back and laugh. And hope that comic Jim Morris — who has brought his George Bush impersonation to almost the same level of perfection as his *Rap Master* Ronnie Reagan — will bless us with a visit from Poppy himself. □

Stand Up! Against AIDS will be presented at Boston Symphony Hall on November 30 at 8 p.m. Tickets are at Ticketron and information is available from AAC, 437-6200, ext. 347.

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